

**Remarks by Ambassador Harry K. Thomas, Jr  
League of Municipalities General Assembly  
December 1, 2010, 9:00 A.M., Sofitel**

To all mayors, I would like to commend each of you for your dedication and commitment to public service. You serve in the highest ranking elected position in your municipality, a position that is often referred to as the head and chief executive officer of the municipality. And as such, you have the ultimate power and responsibility to ensure the implementation of all laws, rules and regulations that govern your municipalities and the nation.

I am proud to have the opportunity today to reaffirm the U.S. Government's commitment to support you and your constituents in good governance and the delivery of public services. For many years now, we have worked very closely with mayors throughout the country to assist in implementing your developmental priorities. We understand the many challenges you face – challenges such as increasing your local revenue base, accelerating local economic development, improving the quality of life through better primary health care and the elimination of malnutrition, and reducing the potential for disasters. As you discuss these challenges today in your breakout sessions, I strongly encourage you to consider new paradigms, new approaches, and learn from each other.

Perhaps as your theme implies, unity in diversity amidst local challenges is the key. The Philippines – with more than 7,000 islands, 10 major languages, many diverse traditions and cultures, is filled with wondrous diversity. You all come with diversity of experiences and opinions. Your goal for this conference should be to celebrate that diversity and learn from it.

I encourage you to harness the wealth of new ideas and knowledge in this room that results from your different backgrounds and perspectives, but also from common interest. As President Obama noted in his speech to the U.N. General Assembly in September, “each country will pursue a path rooted in the culture of its own people. Yet experience shows us that history is on the side of liberty; that the strongest foundation for human progress lies in open economies, open societies, and open governments.”

As the largest grant donor of foreign assistance to the Philippines, the U.S. Government will provide approximately \$130 million, this year alone. We support programs in the areas of health, education, economic growth, environment, energy, democracy and governance. We also help strengthen the Philippine armed forces and the civilian law enforcement agencies to foster peace and security. Today, over 60 percent of our foreign assistance to the Philippines is strategically focused in Mindanao, where the development needs are greatest. We in the U.S. Government are ready to be your partner in offering a higher quality of life to your people, which is a basic human right.

A common thread of progress is the principle that governments are accountable to their citizens. And the diversity in this room makes clear – no one mayor has all the answers, but one can build on collective, innovative progress to make government more open and accountable.

As you map out the directions that the LMP will take in the next three years in support of President Aquino’s “*tuwid na daan*,” please note that the U.S. Government stands in unity with you. In the coming months, the U.S. Government will develop a new Country Development Cooperation Strategy for the Philippines. We look forward to

the results of your dialogues and consultations today, as these will inform our new strategy. I am confident that, with stronger but more accountable municipalities, the Philippines will be able to achieve economic growth and development. *Kayo ang susi sa kaunlaran!*

*Maraming salamat at magandang umaga.*